

**Big Cypress National Preserve
ORV Advisory Committee Meeting
November 29, 2007
Everglades City School
Everglades City, Florida
3:30 p.m.**

Meeting Summary

Committee Members. Present – Win Everham, Wayne Jenkins, Robin Barnes, Manley Fuller, Franklin Adams, Karl Greer, David Denham, Chuck Hampton, Barbara Jean Powell, Marsha Connell, Ed Woods, Gary Lytton, Curt Wittholf. Not present - Steve Thompson.

Preserve Staff Present. Karen Gustin, Superintendent; Pedro Ramos, Deputy Superintendent; Ed Clark, Chief Ranger; Ron Clark, Chief of Resource Management; Dennis Bartalino, Chief of Maintenance; Damon Doumlele, Environmental Protection Specialist; Delia Clark, contracted facilitator.

Public Attendance. Approximately 25 members of the public attended.

Superintendent's Welcome. Ms. Gustin welcomed attendees and introduced the Committee. She emphasized that Committee members were chosen to represent communities and not organizations. The Preserve will be looking at adding members in the areas of wildlife and wetlands science. Laurie McDonald of Defenders of Wildlife has been contacted to serve. Ms. Gustin introduced Roy Bennett, Sergio Guzman, Antonio Fion, and Nery Ruano of the national park system of Guatemala, who were visiting the Preserve and other south Florida national parks. Mr. Bennett then spoke briefly about the Guatemalan park system.

Agenda. Ms. Clark reviewed the following agenda:

- 3:30 Welcome, introductions
- 4:10 Parameters
- 4:45 Committee protocols
 - Meetings
 - Ground rules
 - Decision-making
 - Meeting logistics
 - Public interface
 - Subcommittees
- 6:45 Public comments – issues for consideration
Continued protocols/issue prioritization
- 7:30 Adjourn

Contact Information. Attendees were advised to send any comments by email to bicy_superintendent@nps.gov; by mail to Attn: ORV Advisory Committee, Big Cypress

National Preserve, 33100 Tamiami Trail East, Ochopee, FL 34141; or by fax to 239-695-0416, Attn: ORV Advisory Committee.

Committee Member Introductions. The Committee members introduced themselves and gave a brief summary of their experience and personal goals:

Ed Woods is Operations Manager at Billie Swamp Safari for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. His professional experience with wildlife is with both terrestrial and marine species. His responsibilities involve overseeing swamp buggy and airboat eco-tour operations in habitat similar to the Preserve's, including the maintenance of swamp buggy trails.

Gary Lytton is Environmental Administrator of the 110,000-acre Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on Florida's Gulf coast.

Curt Wittholf is the Coordinator for Science and Environmental Education for the Collier County School District, class levels K-12. His department strives to build educational partnerships with other entities, including the Preserve. Almost the entire 6th grade student body attends field trips in the Preserve each year, becoming familiar with habitat, data collection, water quality and soil sampling, and other field observations. He enjoys nurturing students, as well as his own children, has a love for the outdoors and environmental ethics, and hopes to lend his skills and knowledge to helping the Preserve resolve issues associated with public access and use.

Win Everham is Associate Professor of Ecological and Social Sciences at Florida Gulf Coast University and has been a resident of south Florida for 11 years. His life experiences include working with the Oregon Department of Forestry, as well as service in the Peace Corps. His professional involvements include developing computer simulations focusing on disturbance factors, both human-caused and those resulting from natural forces. His interests are in science, policy, and academia, and he has a strong belief in the democratic process.

Wayne Jenkins is a native of Collier County and president of the Collier Sportsmen and Conservation Club. He started hunting Bear Island long ago when cattle still grazed the area. He got involved with the creation of the Preserve when planned development of the Dade County Jetport threatened the Big Cypress. He later worked to create the Big Cypress Addition.

Robin Barnes is a resident of Everglades City and a seventh-generation Floridian. Her professional involvement is marketing. She feels Big Cypress is one of the last remnants of Old Florida and worries that if we do not protect it, there will be nothing left for her grandchildren. She wants future generations to be proud of this generation for saving it.

Manley Fuller is president of the Florida Wildlife Federation and is a wildlife biologist and botanist. Prior to his current post, he served as Regional Biologist for the National Wildlife Federation. His involvement with Big Cypress began in the early 1980s and includes accompanying panther researchers in the field, FWF/NWF litigation related to fencing I-75 to protect the Florida panther and other species, assuring environmental compliance associated with oil operations at Raccoon Point, lobbying Congress to create the Big Cypress Addition, and promoting responsible ORV management. In addition, he has served on many natural resource

advisory committees, including the Florida Greenways Commission and the Babcock Ranch Advisory Board.

Franklin Adams has been hunting and recreating in Big Cypress, his favorite place, since 1945. He is a former land surveyor who surveyed in Big Cypress, Everglades National Park, and the Florida Keys and feels the Big Cypress is all that is left of the vast lands that provide the outdoor experiences dear to him. He helped establish the Preserve and the Addition, and he has worked with each of the Preserve's superintendents. He served as environmental community representative on the Big Cypress Swamp advisory committee associated with commercial access for oil production.

Chuck Hampton is a native of Arcadia, Florida, and a Big Cypress landowner. He serves as volunteer area coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Hunter Education Program. At least five generations of the Hampton family have hunted the Cypress. Chuck and his wife reared their three children in the Cypress ever since they were old enough to hold their heads up. It is his hope that his great-grandchildren will grow up hunting and roaming around the Cypress just as he and his forefathers did.

Karl Greer is a third-generation resident of Homestead, Florida, and a Big Cypress landowner. He has been recreating in the Big Cypress since 1972, growing up spending his free time in the Preserve, and later rearing his three children there. He has a strong personal interest in the Preserve's management and is tired of outside interference trying to rob his friends and family of their outdoor heritage.

Barbara Jean Powell started hunting and camping with her family in the Big Cypress as a youth. She spent days on end experiencing the freedom of exploring the backcountry on a swamp buggy and hiking into cypress domes. Her family's culture is integrally linked to the Big Cypress, and she has land interests in Big Cypress private property. Her early experiences in the Cypress is what drives her volunteer service as Wildlife and Resource Management Liaison for the Everglades Coordinating Council and her involvement with numerous other state and regional conservation/environmental organizations and natural resource-related advisory committees.

Marsha Connell serves with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways and Trails. She serves on the T. Mark Schmidt Off-Highway Advisory Committee, which addresses issues on a state level that are similar to those the NPS is facing in managing off-road vehicles in the Preserve. She is committed to using this experience to help the Preserve strike the necessary balance between resource protection and recreational access.

David Denham has been recreating in the Big Cypress since 1967. He supports multi-use recreation in the Preserve, but as a board member of the Florida Trail Association, he wants to assure the Florida Trail is routed through wilderness with the least interference as possible from other uses. He hopes to facilitate better access into the backcountry for a broader base of Preserve visitors.

Parameters. Ms. Gustin discussed the parameters of the committee and distributed a handout (Attachment) describing areas within and outside the scope of committee discussion. She

discussed the purpose of the committee as described in the Preserve's Recreational Off-road Vehicle Management Plan and explained the concept of adaptive management.

Clarifying Questions. Ms. Clark asked the attendees if there were any clarifying questions about the parameters. Questions and comments related to not enough time for public comment, concerns about areas outside Committee discussion, multiple public comment periods in future meetings, and ecological integrity and science issues being within the Committee's purview.

Meetings. The Committee made the following decisions concerning meetings:

Length: 4-6 hours.

Frequency: More frequently initially. Every other month, at least during the first year.

Time of day: 4-8 p.m.

Public comment periods: Several during the meeting. Staff presentations would not be considered public comment.

A subcommittee consisting of Mr. Greer, Ms. Powell, and Ms. Barnes was appointed to set up the annual calendar and decide the best times to meet.

Attending by phone: Due to potential technical problems, this should be discouraged.

Location: To be determined by the subcommittee, but the recommendation was to hold meetings in the communities local to the Preserve.

Ground Rules. The Committee adopted the following ground rules:

1. Be respectful and courteous; use good manners.
2. Be concise. Try to edit your comments so all will have a chance to speak.
3. Speak when recognized. Allow others to finish speaking without interruption before you speak.
4. Do not engage in personal criticism or harassment. Stick to the issues.
5. It is fine to build on the ideas of others in a collaborative way.
6. Avoid assigning or assuming intentions. Seek clarification.
7. Check notes and minutes to be sure your ideas are recorded accurately.
8. Stay focused on the stated agenda for each meeting. If you want to bring up other issues, explain how they connect to agenda items or put them in a "parking lot" for later consideration.
9. Turn off your cell phone before the meeting starts or, if you are anticipating an emergency-related call, mute it. Request this of the public as well.
10. Listen!
11. Committee members are expected to attend regularly.
12. Be open-minded and receptive to others' ideas.
13. Do your homework—come prepared.

The Committee decided that strong facilitation was needed.

Working Principles. A subcommittee consisting of Ms. Powell and Ms. Connell was appointed to develop a set of working principles, using those developed by the Golden Gate NRA Negotiated Rulemaking Advisory Committee for Dog Management as a starting point.

Decision-making. A quorum would consist of 3/4 (currently 11) of the membership. If a quorum is not present, the committee may conduct business but not make decisions. Voting will be avoided, and consensus will be used with majority/minority reporting as a fallback.

Public Interface. Public comment will be received by email, mail, fax, or in person. Multiple public comment periods will be scheduled during meetings prior to decisions by the Committee (“punctuated” public comment), with a general comment period at the end of the meeting. Comments by individual members of the public will be limited to three minutes. During public comment periods, input from resource professionals may be received.

Public Comment Period. Public comments were received as follows:

Harley Balman expressed concern about the impact to his family from reduced access and use of the Stairsteps Zone 4 area.

Sam Sykes asked for reversal of the provision in the ORV plan that prohibits unlicensed drivers to operate an ORV in the Preserve. He was concerned about issues of safety and quality of outdoor experiences due to concentrating use to a limited trail system and believes the ORV plan fails to acknowledge or consider adverse effects on traditional recreational uses.

Eric Kimmel expressed concerns over limited airboat access and the economic and other impacts implementation of the ORV plan is having on small businesses and the Gladesman culture. He distributed to Committee members a packet of information detailing these issues.

Mike Larkins asked that special ORV access be provided for the elderly and disabled, such as allowing the use of swamp buggies as shooting platforms. He requested early notice of upcoming Advisory Committee meetings so members of the public can make arrangements to get off work or take vacation days to attend.

Frank Denninger (Jetport Conservation and Sportsmen’s Club) emphasized the need for a “fail safe” mailing list for public notification. He expressed concerns about the effect of the ORV plan on the culture associated with the Preserve and requested the Committee be expanded to include a “cultural professional” and a business interest. He also recommended that the Preserve hire a full-time staff position dedicated to compliance with cultural responsibilities. He also had concerns about the Committee reaching decisions by consensus.

Brian Scherf (Florida Biodiversity Project) said that the makeup of the Committee is skewed, and that the environmental community is not well represented.

John Adornato (Director, Sun Coast Region, National Parks and Conservation Association) supported consensus-oriented decisions but was confused as to how decisions will actually be made and hoped this will be more evident with time.

Laurie MacDonald (Defenders of Wildlife) said she was concerned that resource protection is not listed among the Advisory Committee parameters and recommended the Committee receive briefings from experts. She approved of Committee self-governance and felt the meetings should be longer and should include field trips. Regarding the possibility of her or others being added to the Committee, she urged the NPS not to delay these appointments, as there are broad ecological, wildlife, and personal issues that must be addressed as soon as possible.

Byron Maharrey was concerned that the NPS has “poisoned the well” by omitting five issues he considers very important from the Committee’s parameters.

Mr. Fuller suggested that meetings be scheduled close to public meetings on ORV trails for management units.

Logistics. A subcommittee consisting of Mr. Fuller, Mr. Doumlele, Mr. Denham, and Ms. Powell was appointed to develop meeting agendas. Suggestions included:

1. Circulate agenda ahead of time
2. Include public comment periods
3. Include presentations by resource professionals
4. Limit agenda to 1-2 items per meeting
5. Members should stay for entire meeting

The Committee recommended buying *Getting to Yes* as committee training for all members.

The Committee would like all read-ahead material at least two weeks before each meeting.

Next meeting. The next meeting will be either January 22 or February 4, 2008, depending on preferences of absent members, at a location to be decided. Meeting locations should be centrally located between both Florida coasts.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Attachment

National Park Service Big Cypress National Preserve Parameters and Scope of the Big Cypress Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Committee

The Big Cypress National Preserve Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Committee is being established as directed in the *Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan, 2000*. This plan guides the National Park Service (NPS) in its management of recreational off-road vehicle (ORV) use in Big Cypress National Preserve, and tiers off of the Preserve's 1991 General Management Plan.

The *Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan, 2000* (pg. 29) states "Under the proposed action, the National Park Service would establish an advisory committee of concerned citizens to examine issues and make recommendations regarding the management of ORVs in the Preserve. The advisory committee would provide access to the extensive knowledge available in the public arena and would offer advice to the National Park Service in the decision-making process in a manner consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. This Committee would be an element of the adaptive management approach that would be used to develop best management practices for ORV use."

Long Definition: Adaptive management [is a decision process that] promotes flexible decision making that can be adjusted in the face of uncertainties as outcomes from management actions and other events become better understood. Careful monitoring of these outcomes both advances scientific understanding and helps adjust policies or operations as part of an iterative learning process. Adaptive management also recognizes the importance of natural variability in contributing to ecological resilience and productivity. It is not a 'trial and error' process, but rather emphasizes learning while doing. Adaptive management does not represent an end in itself, but rather a means to more effective decisions and enhanced benefits. Its true measure is in how well it helps meet environmental, social, and economic goals, increases scientific knowledge, and reduces tensions among stakeholders.

Abridged Version: Adaptive management is a process that promotes flexible decision making that can be adjusted based on new science or new information. It is designed to improve understanding and emphasizes learning while doing, and is a means to more effective decisions and enhanced benefits.

Following is a preliminary list that provides guidance to the committee on the scope of their deliberations and what areas are or are not open for discussion. This list is not meant to be all inclusive as other issues may come up that have not been anticipated.

Areas within the scope of committee discussion

1. Vehicle Specifications – Examples: tire pressure, vehicle types and weight, length and width of airboats.
2. Development of lottery system
3. Trail Alignment/re-alignment
4. Access Points
5. Trail treatment techniques
6. Education/Compliance programs
 - incentive programs for compliance
7. Signs/Trail Markings
8. Volunteer Activities/Programs
 - Adopt a Trail
9. Seasonal/Temporal Closures
10. Trail Names
11. Defining Visitor Experience
12. Trail Classifications via
 - a. vehicle type
 - b. level of difficulty
13. Conflicts in Use

Areas outside the scope of committee discussion

1. Re-opening the Environmental Impact Statement – Example: Exceeding the establishment of 400 miles of primary trail
2. Addition lands management
3. Re-instituting dispersed use
4. Increasing number of permits
5. Non-recreational use of ORVs